

## Ascension

2016

- “*As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven.*”
- Luke gives us this briefer account of the Ascension; the account in our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles is much more descriptive and better known.
- ...and there is also a brief third account of the Ascension at the end of the Gospel of Mark.
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- We see in the Gospels how Christ’s body was glorified at the moment of His Resurrection by new properties it had—moving through locked doors, vanishing from sight at will, etc.
- ...and yet His true glory still was veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity...much as His Body and Blood, soul and divinity even now remain with us, but veiled under the appearance of ordinary bread and wine in the Eucharist.
- Jesus walked, talked and even ate with the apostles until His Ascension.
- But Jesus’ discourse with Mary Magdalene outside the tomb indicates a difference in His resurrected glory, and that which He would unveil at His Ascension: “*I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.*” ((Jon 20:17)... a glory far beyond our conception of time and space.
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- And Jesus’ Ascension marks the entry of humanity—our humanity—into divine glory...a glory symbolized in our first reading by the cloud upon which He ascended to Heaven.
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- We remember that a cloud manifesting God’s glory was seen often in the Old Testament, as at:
  - Mt. Sinai in the Exodus.
  - The pillar of cloud leading the Israelites in the desert;

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- The cloud that descended upon the tent with the ark of the covenant during the Israelites trek through the desert;
  - ...culminating with the cloud descending upon Jesus and the apostles at the Transfiguration—from which the Father proclaimed: *“This is my beloved Son; listen to Him.”* (Mark 9:7)
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- Now, Jesus’ Ascension is not simply a literary device or symbol, but an actual historic occurrence.
- He foretold of it in a couple of places in the Gospels...especially notable in John 6, when Jesus asks: *“Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?”* (Joh 6:62 RSV)...telling them in advance the proof that they would witness if they stayed with Him.
- Through the Ascension, Jesus—the true priest of the new and eternal Covenant, *“...entered, not into a sanctuary made by human hands...but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”* (Hebrews 9:24)
- And He tells the apostles: *“...it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you...When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth... (John 16:7-13)...the Spirit Who descends upon the apostles at Pentecost, as we’ll celebrate next week.*
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- Jesus’ Ascension began the final stage of coming of the Kingdom of God.
- ...and as head of the Church, He goes before us into the Father’s kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in hope of one day being with him forever...
- ...for, as the Council of Chalcedon noted in 451, Jesus, in His divinity, is of the same substance (“consubstantial”) with God the Father...but also consubstantial with us in His humanity.
- And so both Peter and Paul describe Jesus as the “firstborn from the dead”; as He the “first-ascended” into Heaven, His faithful disciples are to follow.

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- Paul writes the Thessalonians about this:
  - “...*the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call... And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord...and so we shall always be with the Lord.*” (1Th 4:15-17 RSV)
  - Is this not our entire longing AS disciples of Christ?...to ascend to God and live with Him forever?
  - Too much to believe, one may say? For men, yes...but we remember St. Paul crying out to the Jews: “*Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?*” (Acts 26:8)...for what is beyond the power of God—the creator of all?
  - It is unbelievable to some because it is far beyond our own abilities and understanding.
  - But, for a person in Jesus’ time, so would the idea of traveling halfway around the world in a day...or speaking to someone halfway around the world in real time...or that people could fly...not because such things are impossible (in fact, they are now commonplace), but only because it is beyond his simpler understanding.
  - How much more so are the divine acts of God Himself not literally impossible, but simply beyond our own limited understanding?
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- The Ascension was further evidence of the truth of Jesus to the apostles that He IS the Son of God...and thus all that He taught and showed to them IS truth...and thus their testimony TO that truth...a testimony which remains the foundation of our faith.
  - As St. John writes: “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you...*” (1Jo 1:1-3 RSV)
  - And as the Resurrection buttresses our faith foundation, the Ascension also gives us hope and longing, as we remember Jesus’ words: “...*I go*

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*and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be.” (John 14:3 )*

- And with the Eucharistic grace received here...we, His disciples, are sent to proclaim these things and this truth to the world...for love of both God (who wants all to be saved) and for love of neighbor (who in his heart, longs for it...whether he realizes it or not).
- So go out and bring others to Christ by your word and example.
- That is our mission...and there is no greater work that we can do in our lives.
- Sure, some may reject the faith...and some may even reject you for asking.
- But you plant the seed...and for those who accept it...they (and Our God) will love you for it...forever.

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### Reading 1 [ACTS 1:1-11](#)

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In the first book, Theophilus,  
I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught  
until the day he was taken up,  
after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit  
to the apostles whom he had chosen.  
He presented himself alive to them  
by many proofs after he had suffered,  
appearing to them during forty days  
and speaking about the kingdom of God.  
While meeting with them,  
he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem,  
but to wait for “the promise of the Father  
about which you have heard me speak;  
for John baptized with water,  
but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

When they had gathered together they asked him,  
“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”  
He answered them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons  
that the Father has established by his own authority.  
But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you,  
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,  
throughout Judea and Samaria,  
and to the ends of the earth.”  
When he had said this, as they were looking on,  
he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.  
While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going,  
suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them.  
They said, “Men of Galilee,  
why are you standing there looking at the sky?  
This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven  
will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”

### Responsorial Psalm [PS 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9](#)

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**R. (6) God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

All you peoples, clap your hands,  
shout to God with cries of gladness,  
For the LORD, the Most High, the awesome,  
is the great king over all the earth.

**R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy;  
the LORD, amid trumpet blasts.

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Sing praise to God, sing praise;  
sing praise to our king, sing praise.

**R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

For king of all the earth is God;  
sing hymns of praise.

God reigns over the nations,  
God sits upon his holy throne.

**R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

### **Reading 2** **EPH 1:17-23**

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Brothers and sisters:

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,  
give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation  
resulting in knowledge of him.

May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened,  
that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call,  
what are the riches of glory  
in his inheritance among the holy ones,  
and what is the surpassing greatness of his power  
for us who believe,

in accord with the exercise of his great might:  
which he worked in Christ,  
raising him from the dead  
and seating him at his right hand in the heavens,  
far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion,  
and every name that is named  
not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And he put all things beneath his feet  
and gave him as head over all things to the church,  
which is his body,  
the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

### **Or** **HEB 9:24-28; 10:19-23**

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Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands,  
a copy of the true one, but heaven itself,  
that he might now appear before God on our behalf.

Not that he might offer himself repeatedly,  
as the high priest enters each year into the sanctuary  
with blood that is not his own;  
if that were so, he would have had to suffer repeatedly  
from the foundation of the world.

But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages  
to take away sin by his sacrifice.

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Just as it is appointed that men and women die once,  
and after this the judgment, so also Christ,  
offered once to take away the sins of many,  
will appear a second time, not to take away sin  
but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since through the blood of Jesus  
we have confidence of entrance into the sanctuary  
by the new and living way he opened for us through the veil,  
that is, his flesh,  
and since we have a great priest over the house of God, “  
let us approach with a sincere heart and in absolute trust,  
with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience  
and our bodies washed in pure water.  
Let us hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope,  
for he who made the promise is trustworthy.

### **Alleluia** [MT 28:19A, 20B](#)

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R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Go and teach all nations, says the Lord;  
I am with you always, until the end of the world.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

### **Gospel** [LK 24:46-53](#)

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Jesus said to his disciples:

“Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer  
and rise from the dead on the third day  
and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins,  
would be preached in his name  
to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things.

And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you;  
but stay in the city  
until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany,  
raised his hands, and blessed them.

As he blessed them he parted from them  
and was taken up to heaven.

They did him homage

and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy,  
and they were continually in the temple praising God.